

Narrator:

This is an America.gov podcast.

For print versions of articles, multimedia, and subscription information, visit www.america.gov.

There must be continued American leadership to halt the spread of nuclear weapons, develop clean energy and advance human dignity throughout the world, President Obama says, restating his commitment to global engagement.

Speaking January 27th in his first State of the Union address, Obama told U.S. lawmakers, Cabinet members, Supreme Court justices, U.S. military officers and the American people that the United States is leading through engagement to advance “the common security and prosperity of all people.”

U.S. engagement includes taking a leadership role in fighting climate change; working to sustain a lasting global economic recovery; establishing partnerships around the world in science, education and innovation; and providing humanitarian food and medical assistance, including in the fight against HIV/AIDS, he said.

The president said the threat of nuclear weapons constitutes “perhaps the greatest danger to the American people,” and his administration is pursuing a strategy to reverse their spread and to ultimately seek a world without nuclear weapons. The United States and Russia are expected to resume negotiations on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START, in Geneva February 1st. The president described the proposed pact as “the farthest-reaching arms control treaty in nearly two decades.”

The agreement is scheduled to be signed ahead of the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit that the president will host in April. Representatives of 44 countries will gather in Washington with the goal of securing “all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in four years, so that they never fall into the hands of terrorists,” he said.

Nations such as North Korea and Iran that are pursuing nuclear weapons, in turn, are facing stronger economic sanctions and increasing international unity against their efforts, the president said.

The president reiterated that American combat brigades will leave Iraq by the end of August, but the United States will continue to work in partnership and support with the Iraqi government and its people. In Afghanistan, he said, stepped up pressure against the Taliban and increased training of Afghan security forces will allow those forces to take the lead for their country’s security beginning in July 2011 and for American troops to begin returning home.

This year, anyone was able to submit a follow-up question on the president’s address and vote on others at YouTube.com/CitizenTube. The president answered several of the questions in a special online event February 1st, live from the White House.

Countries and international organizations that will pledge money to help Haiti recover from the January 12th earthquake have agreed to hold a donors conference in New York in March and have declared a

10-year commitment to the country. The needs in Haiti are immense, and the Haitian people are continuing to suffer despite the massive aid and relief effort that mobilized as a result of the disaster, they say.

At the Haiti Ministerial Preparatory Conference in Montreal January 25th, the government of Haiti and key donors and partners, including the United States, Canada, Brazil, the European Union, Spain and France, agreed to respect the sovereignty of the Haitian government and people in the joint reconstruction and development effort, and align their priorities with those established by the government of Haiti.

According to the chairman's statement, released January 25th, the conference attendees declared that "Haitians own their future," and pledged to stand with Haiti for the long term.

"An initial 10-year commitment is essential, as is a concerted effort to build Haiti's capacity. Sustainable development, including environmental sustainability, climate resilience, disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness, will be a cornerstone of our joint approach," the statement says.

In her remarks at the conference, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said it is "important that we see ourselves as partners with Haiti — not patrons." The United States will support the Haitian government "so that this is truly a Haitian-led effort, one that responds to the aspirations and the needs of the Haitian people," she said.

The secretary said that ahead of the donors conference in New York, the pledging countries and organizations have decided to hold technical meetings to do a needs assessment and plan coordination ahead of declaring how much money they will give in March.

Haiti is still in an emergency, and Clinton cited Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive's statement in Montreal that not all of the Haitian people are currently being fed, given water, or receiving medical treatment. "We are committed to ... doing this in a way that builds confidence in the international community and among donor states and donor organizations and individuals," she said.

This podcast is produced by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs. Links to other Internet sites or opinions expressed should not be considered an endorsement of other content and views.